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Question of Cyprus

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 4 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter dated 12 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey (A/71/875-S/2017/321), which also refers to the letter dated 28 April 2016 (A/70/855-S/2016/406), upon instructions from my Government, I wish to state the following:

Article 121 (2) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea explicitly provides for the entitlement of islands to a territorial sea, contiguous zone, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone. This entitlement is well established as customary international law and, as such, is opposable also to States that are not parties to the Convention, such as Turkey. The Turkish claims described in the aforementioned letters leave Cyprus with no continental shelf and/or exclusive economic zone to the west of longitude 32°16′18″E, disregarding the right of the Republic of Cyprus to maritime zones to the west of the island of Cyprus.

The Republic of Cyprus declared an exclusive economic zone in 2004 and has inherent rights over the continental shelf of the island of Cyprus, the outer limits of both zones being the median line with the opposite States, pending agreement to the contrary. In this regard, the Republic of Cyprus has signed exclusive economic zone delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon and Israel, on the basis of the median line.

The offshore exploration for block 6, declared and licensed by the Republic of Cyprus, is undoubtedly within the exclusive economic zone/continental shelf of Cyprus, in a marine area that lies to the south-west of Cyprus and that has already been delimited, in accordance with the relevant rules of international law, between the relevant opposite coastal States, namely the Republic of Cyprus and the Arab Republic of Egypt, by means of an exclusive economic zone delimitation agreement (2003). The exploration and/or exploitation of block 6 is an exclusive sovereign right of Cyprus in accordance with international law and does not affect the rights of any third State, including Turkey.

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The assertions made on the part of Turkey are thus legally unfounded and beyond any reasonable geographical limits. The Republic of Cyprus reiterates that the Government of Cyprus remains determined to uphold and protect its sovereign rights to explore and exploit its natural resources within its continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, using all peaceful means at its disposal, in good faith and within the framework of international law.

I would highly appreciate it if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 41 and 73 (a), and of the Security Council, and published on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and in the next *Law of the Sea Bulletin*.

(*Signed*) Kornelios S. **Korneliou**